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Holly Springs Female Institute information for parents, 1 August 1852

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What constitutes a true gentleman?

This subject should excite interest in the mind of every young man, for three great reasons; first, That his attention may be turned towards himself, That he may scrutinise his own conduct, and by correcting his own, may be more ready, to forgive the faults of others; secondly, That he may enquire into the characters of those with whom it may be his lot, to become associated, bearing in mind, That, as metals of different kind, by rubbing lose part of their splendor, so different characters, by frequent associations, mutually assimilate each other; lastly, That the character and habits, formed by the youth cling irradicably to the man.

It is easy for us to decide, carelessly or rather thoughtlessly, whether a certain individual may or may not be a true gentleman; yet how often are we mistaken, from the fact, that we permit the mere name or resemblance of the individual, to be the chief arbiter in such decisions— It frequently happens, that if we see a person, without having

any acquaintance with him whatever, immediately form some opinion of his character, and whether that opinion be good or bad, depends in a great measure, upon either his name, or resemblance to some other individual, whose character may be, well known— External appearances are very good so far as they go, but they are inadequate, to supply the investigations of an enquiring mind; besides, the same externals are not always indicative of the same internals, and since a true gentleman, is of necessity, one of a pure heart, their evidence is of no value.

But one might ask, how are we to determine, in order to do justice to our selves and those upon whom, we may be so presumptuous, as to pass sentence?

The question is more readily asked than answered, there are certain principles however, which if properly applied, are sure to separate the good from the bad, and the right from the wrong.

Without referring to a long line of ancestry,

It should be asked, is he a man of integrity, is he of undoubted veracity, is he of temperate habits, does he remain unshaken by the assaults of vice, is he kind and benevolent towards those, who are needy, is he courteous and affable in his manners, and last, though not least, is he affectionate towards his Parents, without which, though he should possess all the others, and a thousand others

like them, yet would be in want of more than he possessed, to complete the true gentleman. There are others of minor importances, which by a happy blending together of the above, may be adequately supplied.

That the possession of the above is requisite to complete the true gentleman, must be apparent, from the very definition, that a true gentleman bears as his armour, a consciousness of right. And many well meaning persons, in the education of their children, fail to awaken early enough the sense of honor and self respect, which is one of the strongest guards against all meanness of conduct.

W. Lowndes Trudwell

May. 1849.

W. L. Shawell's
Composition
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